

NICHOLAS CLEEVER'S MONEY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE SECOND LIFE."

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CHAPTER IV.

HAT Thaddeus would say was soon apparent. He burst into his sister's room without knocking, in a white heat of rage. His poetic temperament was apt sometimes to make him over-ride the petty decencies of life without hesitation.

"There is that driveling old idiot again! I'll not put up with it, mother. I must have peace in my own house. He was here last week. I'll insult him."

"No, Thaddeus, you will not," said Louise, quietly, as if she were speaking to a refractory child. "He is a gray-haired old man, not far from the grave. You will treat him with proper respect. I will go down, mamma, and meet him—dinner is ready."

Thaddeus threw himself on a chair sullenly, stretching out his legs.

"I'll not sit at the table with him—he wheezes and drivels! I suppose he has a new supply of impertinent questions: 'What are you at work at now, Thaddeus?' and 'How much do you make a week?' You can send my dinner up here by Prudy. I'll not go down."

"Oh, Thaddy dear—do be patient! I know he's dreadfully unpleasant. But—"

Mrs. Rawley's blue eyes grew rounder, and she caught her breath. She was not a mercenary woman; but if Cousin Nicholas, when he died—and he must die soon—would leave them but a few of his millions of hoarded dollars, poor Thaddy's genius would grow like a flower under a burning sun, Beesy would not have to sit up half the night painting miserable little menus, there would be new warm gowns and nice gloves and shoes—Her eyes fell on the patch on her worn boot; no blacking would hide it.

"Oh, Thaddy darling," she broke forth, "don't offend him! He shows such a disposition to be friendly, and he really seems to be looking round to decide what to do with his property. Goodness knows, I don't wish him dead, and I'm not covetous; but two millions, Thaddeus—two millions!"

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"Stuff! I don't believe a word of it!" growled the young man, kicking the cat that was trying to climb upon his knee. There was a minute's pause, during which Mrs. Rawley watched him breathlessly. "Well, go down, mother," he grumbled, at last. "I'll be there presently. I don't want to offend the old miser—he's your relation, and he is old, as Eloise says."

When Thaddeus descended to the little dining-room, in his evening-dress, a rose in his button-hole, his face was radiant and his step airy—he beamed with hospitality.

"Ah, Cousin Cleever, how kind you are to your beggarly relations!" he cried, wringing his hand. "Most millionaires ignore poor devils like us. Sit down, sit down! Our fare is humble; but you are welcome."

The old man stood stiffly, holding his chair, scanning Thaddeus contemptuously from head to foot.

"Have you taken to play-acting, young man? There's something to be earned by it: but don't rehearse to me."

"Dear Thaddy, that's not the way!" Mrs. Rawley pleaded, in an agonized whisper. "Do keep quiet. Cousin Nicholas, do sit down. Will you have some of the meat-pie? I think it is nice; Beesy made it herself."

"And why shouldn't she make it herself? A healthy strapping girl! What d'ye want with that black wench in the kitchen, anyhow? That's what makes paupers of you."

"Prudy?" replied Mrs. Rawley. "Dear Cousin Nicholas, I don't pay her wages—the poor creature is out of the Orphanage. It's a charity to keep her. How do you find the pie?"

"He finds that he can't eat it, unless he has the stomach of an ostrich," Thaddeus broke forth, pushing his plate away.

Louise glanced from one man to the other, her eyes twinkling.

"It is very good," she said, calmly, helping herself to it; "crust light, meat tender. If you were as hungry as I, you would think it delicious, Thad."

But Thad was in the humor of a perverse child who must make an uproar, whether a whipping will follow or not.

"I am not going to eat scraps," he said, loudly. "Here, Prudy: run down to the shop at the corner and bring home a couple of partridges that I saw there. You can broil them for Cousin Nicholas and me. Here's the money." He thrust his hand in one pocket and another, in vain. "Give the girl the change, Eloise."

Louise handed Prudy the two dollars out of her purse, with a worried yet quizzical glance at her mother, who talked fast and loud to Cousin Nicholas, hoping that he saw and heard nothing.

The birds were brought, cooked, and placed before Thaddeus. Cousin Nicholas glared at the one which was laid on his plate, in a silence so prolonged that Mrs. Rawley began to tremble.

"Will you not taste it?" she asked.

"Taste it? No! I would as soon eat money! Partridges at a half a dollar apiece! Dress-suits! Negroes kept out of charity!" The old man, who was long and lean, with a hawk-like face, stood up, leaning with both hands on the table, turning his beak and black eyes on each in turn, like a bird of prey. "Mary Rawley, that boy of yours has been dragging you down for years. But, this night, you have gone over the precipice. I've—I've—made up my mind. No, sir!" shaking off Thad's hand, which he laid appealingly on his arm. "I've weighed and measured you! Where's my cloak? Hush! You need not talk to me, Mary. I've made up my mind. Partridges! Charity!"

"You are not going to leave us in anger, Cousin Nicholas?" cried Mrs. Rawley, trembling through all her plump body.

"Anger? What is it to me? Why should I be angry because you are fools? I am disappointed. Blood counts for something with me, fool that I am, and there's few of my kin living—"

"Yes, blood; that's it! We are your kin, dear Cousin Nicholas. Oh, Thaddeus, stop him! Don't let him go! Why do you sit there, Beesy, as if you were dumb? We are your kin—your dear cousins—"

"Stuff! Cousins! If that sham jack-a-dandy of a man were my son, I'd disown him! Good-night." He pushed past her to the door, and then, hesitating a moment, beckoned to Louise.

"Beesy, I've no complaint against you. You're not a sham nor a fool, except in so far as you let that fellow make a pack-horse of you. Come to my house on Saturday. I have something to say to you. But alone! Mind you, alone! I've done with these others."

He went out, banging the door after him.

"And a good riddance!" quoth Thaddeus.

"Oh, Thaddy, you have ruined us! Two millions! Two— And all for a nasty miserable partridge!" sobbed his mother.

"Not miserable at all! They're very fat. And Prudy, for a wonder, has cooked them to a turn. Try a bit, Beesy? No? Well, you're very foolish."

He began to dissect his bird with a jaunty air of indifference. But his hand shook so that he could hardly hold the fork, and the blood settled in purple spots on his delicately cleft chin and jaws.

After he had finished his dinner, he paced moodily up and down the hall for an hour, and then suddenly announced that he was going into town, and would not return that night. The smell of the meat-pie in the house nauseated him, he said, and his mother's red eyes were enough to make him swear, if he were a swearing man.

"He has no money. Where will he sleep. Beesy?" moaned Mrs. Rawley, watching her darling as he strode across the field.

"There is a very comfortable lounge in the studio," said Louise, calmly.

"I did not think he had built at all upon poor Cousin Nicholas's money. He feels the disappointment keenly. I can't bear to think of his going in there to be awake and suffer alone, dear boy!"

"A wakeful night may be good for him," said Beesy, whose patience was pushed to its farthest limit.

Mr. Rawley, however, did not spend the night battling with conscience on his lonely couch. He entertained a select party of friends in the studio. There was a delicious game supper with plenty of wine. The best caterer in town furnished it. He had already a long bill against the young artist.

CHAPTER V.

LOUISE RAWLEY kept her appointment on Saturday with Mr. Nicholas Cleever, going out to Media in an afternoon train.

When Louise was a child, she had a habit of climbing up into a tree or on top of a post, and of sitting there reading a fairy-story or munching cake, while she looked down at the other children. Now, headed by Thad, shook the tree or pulled at her skirts to drag her down. Her happiest moments were spent on these sunny perches. Now that she was grown, whenever trouble came, she had the feeling that she was on a height in the sunshine, and that nobody should drag her down. She had heard, just now, that Thaddeus was leading a gay life in

town, going to receptions and balls, and giving dainty luncheons in his studio to a few favored friends. Where was the money to come from to pay for all this? As she took her seat in the car, she felt as if she were being dragged down to misery by strong and cruel hands, and tried with a cheerful obstinacy to hold herself firm, by hastily remembering all the bright and pleasant things which she could summon about her. The tears came up to her soft brown eyes, but she shut her lips tightly and winked them back. "How well mother is, this fall!" she told herself. "Not a twinge of neuralgia! And Prudy—what a trusty affectionate creature she is!" And what a perfect day was this, the sun so clear, the wind strong. The golden-rod yet blazed a dull yellow in the fields, and all the trees and even the weeds in the stubble had put on their fall coloring—bronze and red and gold. When God sent such a day as this, it was mean and ungrateful to think of petty little vexations!

While she was manfully fighting her worries, she heard a gurgle of delight and a hearty voice behind her, and, at the sound, all her trouble vanished.

A shabbily-dressed old man, and a lad badly crippled, were coming into the car. They hurried to meet her, almost tumbling over the seats.

"Oh, Beesy—is it really you?" the boy said, holding her hand in both of his and snuggling down into the seat beside her.

His father found a place behind and leaned over her shoulder. He had a round boyish face, wrinkled by the smiles of sixty years, a fringe of white hair and whisker ridiculing the red cheeks and twinkling gray eyes.

"Well, well—you are coming out to stay with us over Sunday. What a surprise it will be for mother and the girls! Hey, Johnny? If we can get her up to the house now without being seen."

Beesy laughed and held their warm hands tight. Her worry vanished like a fog before their happy friendly faces. The Rantouls were poor hard-working people, with plenty of sickness and want under their roof; but she never came to them without carrying away enough happiness and comfort and fun to last for a month.

"Such luck that you're coming!" said Johnny. "Good things always come together. Dad and I got out of the works an hour earlier, to-night."

"And we have a little something extra for supper," whispered his father, beaming, in her ear. "A young goose, to tell the truth. Mrs. Rantoul had a barrel of apples sent her as a present, and we have had stewed apples for tea

for three weeks. A delicious relish, I know—but monotonous. So, to-night, I brought a goose to supplement the sauce. When the girls see you and the goose, they will, no doubt, bring in one or two of the neighbors for supper, and we can have a dance."

"No doubt," said Beesy.

She knew the ways and manners of the Rantouls. It would be impossible for them to sit down to baked potatoes and salt without making a feast of it, and summoning some of their neighbors to help them eat it. Life itself, with their poverty and needs and diseases, was a long feast, with hosts of friends.

"But I did not come to visit you, this time," said Louise. "I have an appointment with my Cousin Nicholas."

"Poor old man!" said Mr. Rantoul. "That is the luckiest thing in the world. He is with us now."

"With you? Has he left his rooms over the bakery?"

"No. But he came to me, the other day, to know what was the lowest figure at which we would furnish him with supper every day. The other meals, he said, he would cook at home. I confess I did not like the idea. I never charged anybody for their bite and sup in my life."

"You have not taken him as a guest for the rest of his life?" said Louise, in dismay.

"No. He would not hear of that. He was able to pay a trifle, he said—a very small trifle. So it was arranged. He comes every night for supper."

Johnny's eyes twinkled.

"And, Beesy, he piles his plate up high just at the end of the meal and carries it over home, 'to finish at his leisure.' There he has the next day's breakfast and dinner."

"I am ashamed of you, John," said his father, refusing to join in their laugh. The train stopped at the moment, and they left the car, crossing the fields toward the little house hidden in trees.

"Mr. Rantoul," said Louise, indignantly, "you must not allow Cousin Nicholas to impose upon you. I know that for years, with his complaints, he has induced Mrs. Rantoul to make his shirts and do all his sewing, without even a 'thank you' in return. But he shall not prey on you for his food. Why, the man is worth millions."

"I doubt it, Louisa. I doubt, sometimes, whether he is not as poor as he professes to be. I am a pretty shrewd man. It's not easy to hoodwink me," shaking his head with an air of

prof and sagacity. "It is not possible that a man with any means should endure the privations which Nicholas Cleever suffers. He has no real estate. Nobody knows of any stocks or bonds owned by him. Where is this money? Who ever saw the two millions? No, I believe that he encourages this gossip about his vast wealth to secure attention and respect. He's deep and sly, but he can't hoodwink old Joe Rantoul! I believe the man to be penniless, and a fit subject for charity."

"There is mother!" cried Johnny, hopping along on his crutch.

Mr. Rantoul was bookkeeper in a large manufactory on the Media road. It was an unusual thing for him to reach home so early. When his wife and children saw him, they, according to the Rantoul habit, prepared to make a holiday of the occasion, and came swarming down the field, waving their handkerchiefs.

Beesy waved hers in return; if she had been a boy, she would have cheered. But she stopped short in the path, and, catching old Joe by the arm, said energetically:

"I am glad I met you! You always do me good! I was so worried before I saw you!"

He patted her hand gently.

"Well, well! It's early for troubles to come to my little girl! But, when the big weights drop in your way, pick them up, put them on your shoulder, straighten your back, and march on! It is astonishing how soon they grow light! You forget that they are there."

"You are all so merry," said Louise. "I never supposed a Rantoul ever had a care."

An odd change flickered over the little man's face.

"There have been some little drawbacks," he said, gently. "Johnny's trouble—you know."

"Yes, yes," cried Beesy, remorsefully. "I did not think. But he is so cheerful—"

"Johnny wanted an education. He has a different intellect from ordinary boys. If he could have become a scholar instead of a mill-boy—I should have liked that. If I could take mother and the children to a farm in Southern California—that was my dream for many a day. It would have added years to her life. This raw air is death to her weak lungs. I am a fruit-grower by trade—you know. I would succeed there. It would be a great chance for the boys, too— Well, well," shaking himself, "it isn't to be. God knows best. Don't tell mother that I spoke of this to you, Beesy. She thinks I have forgotten our old plans."

"Mother" was a roly-poly, homely little

woman, bubbling over with delight and welcome, and the children were like her—short, fat, and jolly. The whole family bore an odd resemblance to an ugly merry party of Humpty Dumpties. They buzzed about Louisa until she broke away from them, saying:

"I must go to the rooms over the bake-shop, and I will bring Cousin Nicholas back to supper."

The Rantouls hurried home to cook the goose, lay the table, and make ready for their feast, and Louise slowly crossed the field and entered the wood, on the other side of which stood the bake-shop over which Nicholas Cleever lived. His rooms were, like the old man himself, scrupulously clean; but they were bare and cold, and stamped with the direst poverty.

He was standing now in front of the empty grate, sharply scanning a slight thoughtful-looking man who was eagerly turning over some old books. It was Doctor Parker; this was his second visit to his new-found kinsman.

"Yes, they're worth a great deal of money, on account of their age. I keep them because every year adds to their price. I don't read them—never cared nothing for books of any sort. I was always more for sociability. But, nowadays, people seem not to care for old folks. It wasn't so when I was young."

"You feel alone because you have no immediate family," said Alan Parker. "I am glad I discovered our relationship. I thought I had not a single living relation."

"Oh, you have some far-off kin beside me. There's one of them now—Louisa Rawley. I saw her coming across the field. She's well-meaning enough, but she has an infernal fool for a brother."

There was a light step on the stairs. Doctor Parker, startled at the thought of a new relative, looked up eagerly from his book.

The door opened and he saw—her!

CHAPTER VI.

MR. CLEEVER invited Doctor Parker to sup with him at the Rantouls'. The goose was well cooked; everybody, even to the old miser, was in a good humor. After Mr. Cleever had gone back to his den, there was music, and later a little dance. Miss Rawley sang "When the swallows homeward fly." She had a sweet chirpy little voice, full of happy gaiety. The song did not suit it at all. Doctor Parker spoke to her but twice all evening, and then with a supernatural gravity. The Rantoul girls whispered their conviction that he was a great scholar, and Beesy kept out of his way. She

was afraid she might make a blunder, and he would think her a fool; and she would not like that, for he really was wonderfully handsome. She staid over Sunday with the Rantouls.

That was the real history of the evening. In Doctor Parker's mind, that evening stood out distinct and clear from his whole life. Ten years later, he could have told you with a quicker throb at his heart of all that happened: of the Rantouls, a set of merry benignant angels; of some delicious nameless viands, food for the gods; of how he sat apart and watched her, finding her more fair and lovable than he had pictured her in his wildest dreams. She sang. Her voice had all tender cadences in it, all high aspirations, and, above all, it hinted of the love of a woman—that gift of God—which had never been given to him yet as to other men, even from mother or sister. Twice in two blissful dreadful moments, he was able to summon courage to speak to her. What he said, he never knew; but he was quite sure it was something silly and frivolous beyond measure. No doubt, he had disgusted her.

He staid overnight at a farmhouse in the neighborhood. He could not summon courage to call at the Rantouls', that day; but he sat in the back pew of the village church, and saw her. He had not the faintest idea as to what the sermon had been about—nor whether, indeed, there had been any sermon.

But she listened! She was at prayer.

On Monday morning, when Miss Rawley returned to town in an early train, she was surprised to see Doctor Parker in the back of the car. He did not speak to her. But, when she changed cars to go to Germantown, he did the same, and, passing down the aisle, bowed to her with as anxious solemnity as though they both had been mourners at a funeral.

"You go to Germantown too, doctor?" she asked, after a moment's desperate search for something sufficiently weighty to say.

"Yes; I sometimes go to Germantown."

His solemnity was portentous. She observed that he was paler than yesterday and that his chin twitched nervously. What was the matter? Could he be in distress?

With much hesitation, he took the seat beside her, but remained in profound silence.

Doctor Parker had been known to his class as the man of coolest nerve and courage among them. But now there was a lump in his throat; he could not articulate; his very heart seemed to tremble as it beat.

Miss Rawley chattered, after the manner of girls, of the color of the trees, the new stations,

the Rantoul children. He listened, with a dangerous fire slowly kindling in his eyes. His courage came back, at last, sufficiently for him to smile feebly. But, before they reached Upsal Station, he was talking rapidly and eagerly, and Louise was listening. The subject was only the block-system of the railway; but Louise thought she never had heard anything of more absorbing interest. Doctor Parker alighted at Upsal and walked beside her to the gate of the old house. They walked at a snail's-pace; for they were now discussing air-brakes on freight-cars, and the subject was apparently of momentous importance. When they reached the gate, he opened it and lifted his hat.

"Will you—will you—" hesitated Beesy, timidly, "come in, doctor? Mamma will be so pleased—"

She did not look at him. But his eyes were fixed now boldly on her sweet blushing face.

"Not now. But may I come another day, and call on Mrs. Rawley?"

She bowed and smiled and said good-bye very civilly, but he went away with a wild fear and ache at his heart. She had not offered him her hand at parting! He had made so sure she would do it. He had watched the little hand in its darned glove hungrily, all the way. Perhaps it was not customary for gentlewomen to allow strangers to touch their hands.

He knew but little of social rules; but it was more likely that she disliked him—thought him trifling and stupid. What balderdash was that which he had talked about Erie stock? And he was sure he had made a mistake in his statements about air-brakes. He found his authority as soon as he reached home. No—he was all right on the brakes. What, then, could have disgusted her? If she had only held out her hand! If he could have touched it once! He spent a miserable day. The gray matter of the brain counted for no more, to him, than the mud in the gutter.

CHAPTER VII.

DOCTOR PARKER called on Mrs. Rawley again and again. He fell into the habit of calling on her two or three times a week. There could be no doubt as to their relations. It was a case of love at first sight between the tender-hearted old woman and the solitary motherless man. Louise, to him, was a mystery; there was a certain awe and passion and dread in his feeling for her. But, for the chubby gray-haired woman in the corner, he felt from the first moment a quizzical kindly devotion. In a fortnight, he was advising her as to groceries, fighting the

gas-office, and ordering coal for her, and listening night after night to her stories of the dances and sleigh-rides and gossip of her youth.

Thaddeus he saw but seldom, and then the young artist treated him "*de haut en bas*," with a contemptuous patronage.

"Who is that fellow that mother has taken up?" he demanded of Louisa, one day. "Buys his clothes at a ready-made shop, evidently."

"At any rate, he pays for them," retorted his sister, with unwonted sharpness. "Doctor Parker is a cousin of Nicholas Cleever."

"Another claimant for the million, eh?" Thad roused himself anxiously. "I'm going to take the old man in hand, Beesy. I've been out twice. Couldn't get in. But I hear he likes a game of cards; I mean to take him out a pack. No money put up—no danger of his sinking a nickel. But I'll play myself into his good graces. I'll win a big stake—when he turns up his toes."

"Thaddeus! how can you?" The tears rushed to her eyes; she caught his arm. "What is the matter with you, brother? You are not yourself these last days! What is it?" She looked into his eyes, which wandered uneasily from hers. He shook off her hold.

"Nonsense! Nothing ails me. But I am a practical man. Why should we let a fortune slip through our fingers because we will not close them on it?"

Thaddeus, after that, continued to besiege the old man; with what success, he failed to state. He now lived in town for days together. Bills from his creditors were shoved over to his mother for payment, when he was in a virtuously honest mood. At other times, he tossed them into the fire.

Mrs. Rawley had a horror of debt. She took her little income, with all that Louisa could earn, and trotted about from restaurateurs and florists to tailors, paying a little here and a little there, as she could, inventing pathetic lies as to "her son's illness," or the "coming sale of his pictures," which deceived nobody. As their demands grew more urgent, she sent one piece after another of her old furniture to pawn. The house each week grew more bare, to Thad's great discomfort. He complained to everybody about it, even to Doctor Parker.

"These women," he said, one day, "contrive to make my house look like an asylum for paupers. Hanged if I wouldn't rather sleep in the barn! That at least is picturesque."

Alan made no reply. He had a shrewd guess at the truth. His physician's eye, too, had told him, in the first glance at Thad's face, the secret

which his mother and sister had never suspected, that he was becoming a confirmed opium-eater.

The artist borrowed a dollar from him, and flung out of the house. Alan, turning into the parlor, met Mrs. Rawley, a sheaf of bills in her outstretched hand. She had wholly lost control of herself.

"What shall I do? Look, look!" she sobbed, trembling violently. "I thought I could clear everything off this year. But I found these in the waste-basket. This man threatens to levy on the furniture—a dealer in fans. To think the very beds and tables must go—for fans. Oh, what shall I do?"

"Is the house held in your son's name?" Alan asked, taking her hand gently.

"Oh, yes. I thought it would please Thaddy. He is nominally the owner of everything."

"I will see him. It will all come right, Mrs. Rawley."

"Oh, poor Thaddy can do nothing. He has forgotten all about these bills. A few trifles he had given to the girls," he said, were all the debts remaining. Fans at fifty dollars each; when Beesy and I— No matter. I don't blame him, Doctor Parker. The poor dear fellow does not think. He has the artistic temperament, you know."

"Yes," said Alan. "Do not worry, Mrs. Rawley. I will speak to him. It is a man's business. Leave it to me and to your son."

What woman does not like to rest her trouble on some man's strength? Mrs. Rawley gave the bills to him and dropped into a chair, her sobs subsiding into nervous yawns and shivers.

"If only they won't take the furniture, Doctor Parker! There is but a little left now. If Thaddy would finish a single picture, it would clear it off. He has so many begun. But he says the affatus leaves him in the very middle of every picture."

"We will see what medicine can do for the affatus," Alan said, laughing.

The laugh did much to restore Mrs. Rawley's confidence. She squeezed his hand in her own pudgy soft ones, and ran upstairs to wash away the traces of tears. Doctor Parker hurried into the little room back of the parlor, where Louise worked. Her usual seat was by the window into which shone the latest beams of the westerling sun, and a low chair by her work-table had come to be regarded as Doctor Parker's seat, since he had fallen into the habit of rubbing her paints for her. While he rubbed them, he talked incessantly. Not that our young doctor was garrulous. But this was the first and only outlet for all the thoughts of

twentyeight years. Miss Rawley was the first person who had taken an interest in his experiments. She seldom spoke except by her sparkling eye and the changes on her face. But she remembered every syllable, and would remind him, when weeks had passed, of some detail which he had nearly forgotten. She alone knew of the great discovery which he thought he had made in the treatment of epilepsy. He was trying his new method of treatment on two patients in Blockley Almshouse. Next week, he would perform the surgical operation upon the brain of one of them which would determine the truth or fallacy of his theory.

When he sat down beside Louise now, and she looked up eagerly, saying "Well, how are they?" he knew that she meant these patients. How delightful it was to pour out all his fears and plans and doubts to somebody! He spoke of them to no one in town. In all his days, he never had had a confidant. It seemed as if he had been silent all of his life before.

But to-day he could not keep his mind on his two old paupers. He noted how thin Louisa's cheek was, and that it had the pallid tinge which comes from lack of proper food. Her eyes were heavy from loss of sleep. Doubtless, she worked at night to pay this scoundrel's debts! Doctor Parker rose nervously and paced the floor. If he could pick her up and carry her off to a home where want should never enter!

He! Why, he was poorer than she! Had he not been a fool when he gave himself to researches in obscure diseases, with the vain hope of advancing science? If he had set himself to hunting up patients, like his neighbor Potts, he would have been able to marry now.

Louisa looked up at him anxiously.

"Have you made no progress? Is the operation postponed?"

"No. We shall have it on Wednesday. C—and D——" (naming two famous specialists from New York) "are coming over to be present. I had no idea that so much interest would be felt in my work."

"Interest?" Beesy's eyes kindled. "Why,

if you be successful, you will give new life to every poor soul who has that terrible disease!"

Alan halted in his impatient walk.

"I would rather give a little comfort and happiness to one woman than life to them all!" he broke forth. "I never have cared for money. But I want it now—money, money!"

Beesy dipped her brush in the carmine with shaking fingers.

"We poor mercenary wretches need money," she said. "But you, with your aims—you are above it."

"I have no aim but one." He came up to the table, his face pale with excitement. "It is to care for you."

She started a little, and held the brush motionless. The silence once broken, the words flowed from him in a passionate torrent.

"Why, I loved you the first moment I saw you! I used to follow you like a dog; happy to look at you, never hoping that you would ever see or speak to me. Now that I know you, I cannot be satisfied without more—without all that you can give. I want your love. I want you to be my own—my wife. Don't shake your head—don't speak for a moment. Hear me. I am a poor friendless fellow. I have neither position nor money—not even a home to offer you. But give me the right, and I will conquer all for you. My love shall keep all want—all trouble far from you—" He stopped, hoarse and breathless, watching her.

Beesy did not look up, but she dropped the brush, making a great red blot on the paper, and her hand crept into his.

An hour later, Doctor Parker stood on the old porch with Louisa. They had said good-bye several times, but she whispered one more question:

"You are sure you never loved a woman before? Sure?"

"Never. Whatever is in my heart, you have it all—"

He parted from her with her kiss on his lips, and, crossing the road, stood face to face with Victoria Walker.

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]

TOGETHER.

BY EMMA S. THOMAS.

It's we two together, in all kinds of weather.
What though the north winds blow,
Bringing the cold and snow:
Storm cannot sever those bound forever—
We two together, defying the weather.

On through the storm we go, on through the drifting snow,
On through the summer's heat,
Guiding each other's feet
Over life's slippery ways—on till the end of day,
We two together life's roses gather.

UNTIL DEATH US DO PART.

BY W. W. BLACK.



I
II. the inexpressible dreariness of this late December afternoon!

The aspect of the sky, and the cold northeasterly wind that blows remorselessly, indicate a heavy fall of snow before many hours are over.

It is almost five o'clock when the London express stops at the little station of

Briarly and deposits two passengers. The first is a young girl. As she descends from a second-class carriage and apparently has no luggage, the porter gives her only a passing glance and hurries on to the assistance of a tall man struggling to extricate numerous rugs and gun-cases from under the seat of a first-class carriage. The man is remarkably handsome. He is broad-shouldered and deep-chested, and has a strong clear voice to correspond.

The porter, taking possession of his traps, carries them to a smart dog-cart which stands near by, while their owner walks leisurely down the platform, and, after nodding to the station-master, enters the small waiting-room. The dusk is gathering, and everything is of a cold gray color, both cheerless and discouraging, while the bitter wind howls and whistles round the small station.

The girl who had got out of the train is talking earnestly with the station-master.

"How far is it to Corston Rectory? Can I walk there?"

Her articulation is very distinct.

"Well, it is a good seven miles," rejoins the man, good-naturedly, "and the road is mighty dreary."

The girl's face for one moment is turned toward the fire, and on it is an expression of absolute despair. She looks slender and frail and little fitted to face on foot the piercing wind and cold. Jack Carrington's face shows no interest whatever. I doubt if he has listened to the conversation. He begins to draw on his gloves, having observed through the window

that the porter has all his luggage stowed safely away in the back of the cart.

"I suppose they did not think I could get here so soon, and they have not sent for me. What shall I do? I do not know the way, and my father is dying."

Mr. Carrington pauses and darts a quick glance toward her. The accent is despairing, and she sat down, clasping her hands in mute agony, but her great dark eyes are tearless.

For a moment, the station-master regards her pitifully, and his faded blue eyes begin to grow somewhat misty. She is so young and helpless.

Then he says, hesitatingly:

"This gentleman is going on to Corston Park, three miles farther. Perhaps he wouldn't mind giving you a lift. He passes right by the rectory gate."

Carrington meets the gaze of two large sad eyes, which turn to him as the station-master finishes his speech.

"Yes, yes, I'll take her," Carrington says, abruptly. "Have you any luggage?" lifting his hat slightly, but scarcely looking at the girl.

"Nothing but this," she says, rising and laying her hand on a small traveling-bag, "and, if it will inconvenience you, I can leave it behind."

"Oh, no!" he says, calls the porter, and hands him the bag.

The groom, who has been kept waiting so long, betrays more surprise than a perfectly trained servant should, on seeing his master escort a lady out of the waiting-room and help her into the dog-cart.

As they drive away through the dusk, Mr. Carrington looks well at his companion's face for the first time. He sees that the features are small and finely cut, and almost like marble in their pallor. It is a beautiful face.

"Aren't you cold?" he asks, at last noticing she is thinly clad, and his deep voice startles her into looking up.

"Yes," she says, and shivers. "I came away in a hurry, and brought no shawl."

He turns to the man behind.

"Hand me a couple of those rugs."

Without any demur, she lets him wrap one around her shoulders, and cover her feet with the other. Then again there is total silence.

On and on they drive through the desolate country. The man's ruddy complexion becomes blue from the intense cold, but the girl's pallor never varies. There is no hurry, no impatience about her; and yet she is going on an errand of life and death. Most women would be full of anxious eager inquiries as to distance and time, but this girl does not ask a single question.

"You have only one mile more," he says, at length, moved by pity to break the silence. A quick glance from the grave eyes, and a quiet "Thank you," are the only answer.

Some minutes later, Carrington draws rein at the rectory. The groom springs to the horse's head, and Carrington lifts her down.

The small gate is opened by a stout maid-servant, who takes possession of the lady's bag.

"I thank you very much for your kindness," she says, and the gate closed after her slight form.

Carrington, springing back into the cart, gathers up the reins and drives rapidly on in the heavy gloom of the winter's night.

II.

ALTHOUGH it is still early in March, fashionable people are already beginning to assemble in town. Mrs. Wickham's husband being an M.P., she has come up early to the great house in Belgrave Square, and this year, contrary to her usual custom, she has brought the children with her.

It is Sunday afternoon. The rays of the setting sun gleam through the windows of the great drawing-room and linger lovingly on the little group gathered there. The two oldest girls are making tea for Mrs. Wickham, and she watches them with an indulgent smile wreathing her beautiful mouth. Uncle Jack has come in, and papa will surely appear in a few minutes.

"Dorothy is having tea with Miss Vernon. She is quite too young to come downstairs yet awhile," Eva remarks, with great complacency, giving the fire a vigorous poke with the tongs.

Jack smothers a laugh and gets up to lean his elbow on the mantel.

"And who is Miss Vernon, Eva?"

Mrs. Wickham answers from the depths of her easy-chair:

"She is the new governess—I told you about her. She is a charming girl. Her father and mother are both dead, and she, poor thing, is left to make her own way in the world. Her father died lately. He was a clergyman in the South of England, and her mother was an Italian."

The door opens at this moment, and Mr.

Wickham makes his appearance. Both little girls bound toward him, and he is installed with great ceremony in the largest arm-chair in the room.

"What is this Margerite tells me about the yacht being made ready for you? You are surely not going away again, Jack?" asks Mr. Wickham.

"No, no, Uncle Jack," chimes in Eva's shrill tones, "you mustn't go; all fashionable people stay the season in town. Don't they, mamma?"

Here they all laugh, and Mr. Wickham at the moment makes no further mention of the projected departure. He turns to his wife.

"Where's Miss Vernon, Margerite? Haven't you had any music yet?"

"I was just thinking I would send for her. But you know she is so very shy, and she always tries to avoid meeting any stranger. Perhaps I'd better go, instead of sending one of the servants," and Mrs. Wickham rises and leaves the room.

Presently the door is pushed open by a beautiful child of five years of age, who runs quickly in, leaving it ajar. Mr. Carrington, glancing beyond, sees Miss Vernon, and a surprised look dawns in his handsome eyes. The new governess and the companion of his drive to Corston that cold night three months ago are the same. She does not glance toward him as he stands on the hearth-rug.

Looking at her employer, she says, in the clear distinct voice Jack remembers so well:

"Mrs. Wickham sent me down to sing."

"Miss Vernon, my brother-in-law, Mr. Carrington," says Mr. Wickham, with a wave of his shapely hand in the direction of the fireplace.

She bows without looking at the face of the gentleman named. Seating herself at the piano, she sings some quaint old hymns with words of her own setting. Then, after striking a few heavy chords, she sings passionate songs of the South, songs her mother taught her when she was a child.

Her voice is wonderfully clear and true; Mrs. Wickham has returned to the room, and, in the dusk, stretches out her hand and touches the governess's shoulder.

"You are tired; thank you, that is enough."

Jack Carrington crosses the room and stands by his sister's chair. When he speaks for the first time, Miss Vernon starts, and, lifting her eyes, looks full at him. Is it a quick look of recognition which flashes across her face, or only a shadow from the flickering fire?

Presently a servant brings lights, and Miss Vernon and the children withdraw.

After the closing door has shut out the slender black-robed form and the happy-hearted children, Jack tells his sister how he drove Miss Vernon that winter evening to the rectory at Corston.

III.

It is very hot in the school-room this summer afternoon. Miss Vernon has sent the children out with the nurse to walk under the trees in the garden of the square, and is reclining on the wide sofa in the half-darkened room. The noise in the square seems to increase, and the sun beats with intense heat down on the closed Venetian blinds. Her temples throb tumultuously, and her hands are dry with a burning fever. It is so very warm. "Come in," she says, in answer to a knock. She does not open her eyes, thinking it is a servant with some message. However, as no words are uttered, and the door is gently closed, the heavily fringed eyelids are slowly lifted. Seeing it is Mr. Carrington, Marion rises in some confusion.

"I beg your pardon," she says, hurriedly.

Jack draws a chair near the sofa, and sits down.

"I dropped in to lunch, and heard you had a headache. You will excuse my coming up, will you not? My sister said you would not mind."

"Oh, no; how can I mind, when people are so very kind to me?" and the dark eyes of Marion meet the blue ones of Jack, but they gave no answer to the mute question portrayed so plainly on his face. There is silence for a few minutes, except for the drowsy hum of voices below and the buzzing of a fly on the window. Jack draws his chair farther behind the sofa, where he can only see his companion's face in profile.

"Miss Vernon, I have something I wish very much to tell you, and I am going to ask you to decide a question on which all my life's happiness depends."

For one moment, her serious eyes are turned toward him. All his life's happiness depends on her answer! Whatever it may be, God help her to decide justly!

He continues rapidly:

"You have never heard that I was married?"

Marion starts, and her hands clasp each other tightly.

"I suppose it is scarcely the sort of story to tell you. I was married for almost six years, and then the woman I called my wife ran away with my most intimate friend." After a slight pause, during which neither moves, Jack goes on: "Of course, I am a free man now; free, in the eyes of the world and the

eyes of the law, to marry again. This is the first chapter in my life," he says, bitterly. "A while ago, it is not so very long—" Jack pauses again, and his voice trembles for the first time—"I met someone whom I believe I love as honestly and sincerely as man ever loved woman."

Surely, Marion Vernon's face alters strangely. Her hands are tightly clasped still, and her slender form is perfectly upright; but her mobile features assume the rigidity of stone, and her breath comes fast and quick as though her panting young heart would burst its bonds. Jack does not see, for his eyes are fixed on the gray wall opposite, fit emblem of his barren life.

"Miss Vernon, I dare not tell her that I love her. I think she is a woman who would say that the words spoken at the altar, 'Till death us do part,' are words which no earthly tribunal can set aside. Will you tell me what you think?"

The question is very quietly put, but there is a strange light in Jack's eyes. The clock on the mantel ticks loudly, and some children playing in the square shout with laughter.

"Mr. Carrington, I am a strange person to ask; but I will tell you what I think. Does the woman you love know you have a wife living?"

Surely any child would have understood the emphatic look and tone.

"Yes, I have told her."

"And she loves you?" What a world of regret in her low voice!

An expression of intense pain crosses the stern face of the man.

"I do not know that she loves me. She has never shown it in any way."

"Then," cries Marion, and her young voice sounds clear as a bell through the still room, "never tell her that you love her. If she did love you, now that she knows your wife is living, she will crush down her love and keep her self-respect. Yes, 'Till death us do part' is the way a good woman understands marriage."

Jack's heart is torn with anguish, but he is not even tempted to upbraid her for her seeming cruelty. There is a look of infinite sweetness and pity in her dark eyes as she adds:

"I am sorry for you; oh, so very sorry! Perhaps it will all come right some day, and you can tell this woman of your love, and it will not be a reproach to your manhood."

He cannot, he dares not, look at the sweet face turned toward him; and she, rising quietly, leaves the room.

I V.

AFTER dinner, Mrs. Wickham sends for Marion to come to her dressing-room.

"My dear, I sent for you because I am quite alone. I declare, it is too trying for anything to be the wife of an M.P. One might almost as well be a widow. But what do these mean? I thought you said your headache was better." With a gentle and caressing hand, she touched the dark rings under the girl's eyes.

Miss Vernon, from the seat she has taken at Mrs. Wickham's feet, makes some inarticulate reply and softly smooths the plump white hand of the kindly woman.

"Marion, Jack tells me that he has told you all about his troubles, and you have opposed the wish dearest to my heart. Child, you are extremely cruel; you do not know what a true heart you have sent away from the woman he loves. He is going off in the yacht next week, and we never can tell how long he will be gone."

Marion is silent, motionless. Mrs. Wickham continues:

"If you knew what a life he has led from the time he was married—and yet, poor fellow, he has always been so patient. If you could know him as I do, then, indeed, you would pity him. Child, what did you say to him?"

The girl's head is proudly erect, and the low voice is clear and firm:

"No doubt I was wrong. The woman whom he loves may think differently from me. Yet I told him what I thought was right, because he asked me. But, even if this woman does not marry your brother, it may make her happier to know that he loves her—yes, I am certain it would, and she would understand—"

Marion does not see a figure pause in the half-open doorway, for her eyes are turned toward the distant sky, and she is wondering vaguely if it were a possible thing to overcome and live down a great love.

Jack speaks from out the twilight:

"Marion, it is you I love!"

What a world of sadness and yearning in the words! Swiftly she looks toward him, and a beautiful light shines in her eyes. Coming toward her as she rises from her chair, Jack folds her passionately in his strong arms, and turns her sweet face up to his.

"Say good-bye," he pleads, and in his voice there is a great despair.

Marion's glorious eyes, radiant with emotion, gleam like stars.

"I did not know—I never could have thought that it was I you loved!" and then the sorrow in

his face wrings her heart, and, passing her slim hand lingeringly, lovingly, over his eyes, she adds:

"You have told her that you love her—she understands; yes, understands thoroughly."

Marion shrinks out of his arms; and he, kneeling beside her, bids her a farewell for years of which she is happily unconscious.

V.

THE wind is just as keen, and the clouds just as leaden and gray, and the little station of Briarly just the same as it was in December three years ago. Marion Vernon thinks it must be all a dream, as she descends from the London express which discharges the Wickhams and their luggage. They have come down to Corston to spend Christmas, and have brought with them the three children, maid, nurse, and French governess. Jack's letter of invitation has included the whole family, but without making any allusion to the past. Jack has been in England since early in the autumn, but has not visited his brother-in-law's house.

In November, the newspapers announced a death which left Jack free, but Mrs. Wickham has never told Marion, leaving her brother to arrange his affairs in his own way; but Jack has made no sign, and Miss Vernon is still ignorant of the truth.

Marion is scarcely altered since we saw her last. The grave sweet smile and earnest eyes are just the same, while, perhaps, her manners are less shy.

They are hardly landed on the platform to-day, when Mr. Carrington comes through the door of the station. Again Marion thinks it all must be a dream.

Is it only her fancy, or has he greatly changed—grown happier, younger, with a look of life and hope in his face, such as she has never seen there before? His voice thrills her and brings quick tears to her eyes, as he utters a hearty "Welcome, everybody." He recognizes Marion and mademoiselle with a courteous bow, almost too formal, and Marion returns it with a very slight inclination of her proudly set little head. This is how they meet after a long separation. He might have given her a warmer greeting. She turns away from the happy family group with a heavy heart.

It takes some time to settle the nurse and children in the carriage; then Mrs. Wickham suddenly discovers that one of her traveling-shawls is missing.

"Marion dear, will you just look for it? It must be in the waiting-room."

Marion goes to look for the missing wrap, and comes back with it almost directly; but, in her absence, the carriage has become too full to hold her. As she hands the shawl to Mrs. Wickham, that kind but artful little woman apologetically says:

"You won't mind driving home with my brother, will you, dear?"

Marion casts a surprised look toward Mr. Carrington, who is very busily arranging some rugs.

"Will you go inside to the fire until I am ready?" he asks, and there is a queer glint in his blue eyes as they look down into hers.

She watches him through the window while he unrolls great fur rugs and settles everything comfortably, wondering vaguely why he takes so much trouble. At last he opens the door, saying curtly:

"I am ready," and she, gathering her wraps about her, goes outside. Mr. Carrington helps her into the phaeton and carefully wraps the furs about her.

"You can go home in the cart with the luggage," he says to the groom, as he gathers up the reins.

The silence is unbroken for some time, though

Jack glances frequently at his companion's face. Finally, leaning slightly toward Marion, he says:

"Do you remember the first time we drove over this road?"

"Yes," she falters.

Jack boldly passes his arm about her. She looks at him with a frightened piteous pleading in her eyes that goes straight to his heart.

"Darling, I have the right to tell you now, for that—I am free. I made you drive with me to-night, because I wanted to ask you to be my wife. I have loved you so long without any hope, child. Are you changed, and have you nothing to say to me?"

At first, she shrinks from him; but, as he speaks, she yields herself to his arm. She does not utter a single word, but looks up at him with a pure and holy light on her face, and Jack bends his head and presses his lips to hers, tenderly, reverently.

So, under the cold December sky, they plight their troth; and, as he draws Marion close to his side, Jack says gravely, while his eyes are radiant with happiness:

"To love, honor, and cherish thee till death us do part."

THE TRUTH.

BY MAUDE S. PEARLEE.

WHAT will it matter, by-and-by,

Whether the skies have been dark or clear,

Whether your heart or mine was true,

Whether my eyes have a smile or tear?

I do not say that my love will last

Through the weary years I must walk alone;

I only know there was a time

My love and life were all your own.

When the fair blue sky took a brighter hue,

If I could but feel your presence near;

And my heart kept time to the happy thought

That spring, with its sweet bright hopes, was here.

But time sped on, with its changes sure,

Does it pain you too, to recall the past?

You need not grieve—I never wished

To hold a love that could not last.

You need not blame yourself alone;

I can touch your hand with never a sigh.

The fault was in nature. We might have known

That you would change—and so would I.

AWAKEN!

BY M. G. MCLELLAND.

"Life is real," sings the poet,

Life is earnest, life is strong;

Grasp the truth and learn to know it,

Hold it as you march along.

Not in drifting, not in dreaming,

Is the good of life attained;

Not by shadows, not by seeming,

Is the truth of life maintained.

'Wake from Lotos-eaters' sighing,

Leave the amaranth and palm;

Let not priceless moments, flying,

Find you mildewed thick with calm:

Strike the note of high endeavor;

Sound it with exultant youth;

Make its chords to ring forever,

Vibrant from the harp of truth.